

IN THE CLAIMS

The pending claims are believed to be as follows:

1-16. (Cancelled)

17. (Previously Amended) The method of claim 27 wherein said natural tissue comprises a biological tissue or a matrix derived from a biological tissue.

18. (Previously Amended) The method of claim 27 wherein said natural tissue comprises pericardium tissue.

19. (Previously Amended) The method of claim 27 wherein said natural tissue comprises small intestine submucosa.

20-26. (Cancelled)

27. (Previously Amended) A method of augmenting the nucleus of an intervertebral disc, said method comprising the steps of:

(a) implanting in the intervertebral disc an intervertebral disc device comprising a length of braided natural tissue sized for introduction into an intervertebral disc nucleus space, wherein said length of natural tissue has a first, straightened configuration and a second, folded configuration, wherein said first, straightened configuration presents a first cross-sectional size and said second, folded configuration presents a second cross-sectional size, wherein said first cross-sectional size is smaller than said second cross-sectional size; wherein said device additionally comprises a drawstring effective for folding said length of natural tissue to its second, folded configuration after implantation of the tissue in a disc nucleus space; and

(b) pulling the drawstring to fold the length of natural tissue.

28-41. (Cancelled)

42. (Previously Amended) A device for augmenting, repairing or replacing an intervertebral disc nucleus, said device comprising: (a) a braided natural tissue implant having a first end and a second end; and (b) a drawstring secured near the first end of said braided tissue implant and passing through said implant at a multiplicity of sites from the first end to the second end; wherein said drawstring is effective for folding said braided natural tissue to a folded configuration after implantation of the tissue in a disc nucleus space;

wherein said implant defines a first, straightened configuration in which the implant has a length-to-width ratio of at least 5:1 when said drawstring has an effective length approximately equal to the length of the straightened natural tissue, and

wherein said implant defines a second, folded configuration in which the implant has a length-to-width ratio of less than 5:1 when said drawstring has an effective length less than the length of the straightened natural tissue,

43. (Original) The device of claim 42 wherein the natural tissue comprises braided pericardium tissue.

44. (Original) The device of claim 42 wherein the natural tissue comprises braided small intestine submucosa.

45. (Original) The device of claim 42 wherein said drawstring passes through the braided implant at a multiplicity of sites throughout the length of the implant, with said multiplicity being at least three sites.

46. (Original) The device of claim 45 wherein said drawstring passes through at least five sites.

47. (Original) The device of claim 46 wherein said drawstring passes through at least ten sites.

48. (Previously Amended) A method of augmenting, repairing or replacing an intervertebral disc nucleus, said method comprising:

(a) providing a braided natural tissue implant having a first end, a second end, and a drawstring, wherein said drawstring is secured near the first end of said braided tissue implant and passes through the implant at a multiplicity of sites from the first end to the second end, and wherein said implant defines a first, straightened configuration in which the implant has a length-to-width ratio of at least 5:1 when said drawstring has an effective length approximately equal to the length of the straightened natural tissue;

(b) implanting said straightened implant into an intervertebral disc space; and

(c) manipulating said drawstring to cause said braided tissue implant to assume a second, folded configuration in which the implant has a length-to-width ratio of less than 5:1, said causing being accomplished by reducing the effective length of said drawstring.